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## Rumi's Philosophy of Love in the Era of U-turned Islam

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The essential awareness of the spiritual state of today's world, and of the question of terrorism, reflects the social pathologies of the modern world – a pathology that is accustoming people to the presence of violence as something quite normal and logical, and where they are all too familiar with danger and the presence of death. There is thus a great need for studies which will stimulate mutual understanding, inter-faith dialogue and multicultural encounters. Hazrat Mawlana, who is one of the greatest spiritual and literary figures of all time, who advocated unlimited tolerance, and for whom love is the most significant conceptual component in a manner transcending all national, cultural and civilizational boundaries, is undoubtedly the most suitable figure for this task.

For this reason UNESCO has designated 2007 as the “year of Mawlana” (the 800th anniversary of Rumi's birth), taking into account that relations between the West and the Muslim world have reached their lowest ebb, creating a dangerous gulf which is growing every day. Through philosophical and mystical concepts in Hazrat Mawlana's works, his importance and spiritual eminence, in whose thoughts we can see a common and shared background for all humans, our dialogue would achieve harmony and unity deeply immersed in the love of and respect for others, whoever they may be. The following paper is the Bosnian answer and contribution to his “Come, come, come again, whoever you may be...” (during the Ottoman period, the Mawlawi order spread into the Balkans) in honouring the International year of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, trying to evaluate his universalist and inclusivist message, and to offer it as a hopeful alternative to the ignorance and lack of spirituality in modern times. Of course, this is quite opposite to religious dogma, and to all fundamentalisms, or in the case of Islam, to the U-turned vision and interpretation of it.

**Key concepts: Rumi's metaphysical and ontological status of Love, philosophical inter-cultural dialogue, U-turned Islam.**

### I

*Lā hayāta lil-ummah allatī lā tahayya thikra 'azamā'ihā* (“a people that does not preserve the memory of its great men has no future”). In this age of globalization, this Arab saying should make us think again, prompting us to adopt it as a motto for our reflections on the cosmopolitan nature of Rumi's works, through which it acquires fresh relevance, while our reflections on his cosmopolitanism should show that his philosophy of love has become even more important in our modern, global world. In fact, in the tradition of respecting and remembering our forebears, the rationale for this type of anniversary is clear enough: on the one hand, to keep alive the link broken by death, and on the other, to celebrate the lasting bond between the deceased (*marhūm*) and his

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descendants – a bond that death cannot erase, but that may in the event be a stimulating partner in the debate, even in the twenty-first century. This is indeed true of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Balkhī, better known as Rūmī in the West, and as Mawlānā in the East.<sup>1)</sup>

Looking at this from a Bosnian perspective, the aesthetic standard of global relevance, set forty years ago by the greatest Bosniac novelist Meša Selimović (1966), in his novel *Derviš i smrt / Death and the Dervish*,<sup>2)</sup> which conferred international importance on him, is a further reason for my commencing my presentation in this year commemorating Rumi by referring to this work of Selimović's. The capacity of the hero of the novel, Ahmed Nuruddin, a learned dervish of the Mevlevi order and shaikh of the tekke in Sarajevo, to imagine the substance of time as a whole renders him a transcultural phenomenon. This is achieved by conceiving of human consciousness and the full scope of the human psyche as the topos of the ethical, emotional, psychological, political, ideological, metaphysical – in short the entire – drama of the intellect and of human action in general. It is my deepest conviction that the musings of this dervish, shaikh of the Mevlevi tekke in Sarajevo – where now, sadly, there is only a petrol station – who stands in defence of the purity of faith and of the Mevlevi order, render him of global relevance as a standard-setter and paragon. As a result, "as long as dialogue is possible, there is a chance of justice; when dialogue comes to an end, it opens the way to violence" (Selimović, p. 12<sup>3)</sup>), since it is through dialogue that we shall achieve harmony and unity as long as it is based on love and respect for others, whoever they may be. The following passages are my own personal attempt to provide an answer to the question raised in his *Dervish*: "Is it a coincidence that we hide behind love, the only certainty in this indefiniteness?"<sup>4)</sup>, when this is what our world so desperately needs.

## II

New insights into comparative and world philosophy should encourage western philosophers and students of Islam to cultivate their interest in Islamic philosophy, to help them define their priorities for deeper study and creative philosophical work, as conducive to an understanding of and programme for the complexity and diversity of Rumi's thinking – Rumi the thinker, poet and, above all, Sufi – to whom this conference, and the year 2007, have been dedicated by UNESCO. It is my sincere hope, therefore, that this international conference will generate many friendships and good philosophies, and in particular a deeper insight into and understanding of Rumi through a clear articulation of the philosophical concepts and theories that would enable Islamic philosophy to share in global philosophical exchanges.

If it is to take part in these globalizing processes, Islamic philosophy must begin with a number of key philosophers from the entire pleiade of Muslim thinkers, each of whom is worthy, in his own distinct fashion, of our study and research, and a deeper understanding of whom preserves

1) See Franklin Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.

2) Meša Selimović, *Derviš i smrt*, Sarajevo-Publishing, 1999; *Death and the Dervish* by Meša Selimović, trans. by Bogdan Rakić and Stephen M. Dickey, Northwestern University Press, 1996.

3) Unable to find this reference; it is quoted from the introductory chapter by Nikola Kovač, p. 12.

4) Meša Selimović, *Death and the Dervish*, p. 409

and advances Islamic philosophy. Recognizing these thinkers is an important step towards mutual understanding and enrichment. As a result, conferences like this are significant if prompted by the need to review and systematically expound the great resources of Islamic philosophical wisdom, and if such dialogue will enable Islamic philosophy to become an active force for the enrichment of world civilization and human society; if, in other words, Islamic philosophy is to gain recognition in the West as a living tradition of philosophical thought and to regain its proper place in the world of living philosophical tradition, rather than merely being the subject of demonstration or repetition in today's world philosophical forum.

Of course, all this goes with a grounding in western philosophy and a systematic comparison of Islamic and western philosophy, since throughout his life and work Rumi himself encouraged this kind of dialogue in the sincere hope that each would learn something from the others,<sup>5)</sup> and it would seem that in his case a deep pluralism of religion was at work: a pluralism in which each religion would be respected, and open to all others. Hence this interpretation of Islamic philosophy as a living religious tradition, not merely knowledge of concepts; the need, that is, for attesting to Islam as a living spiritual tradition, contrary to the study or reconstruction of Islam as an abstract, theoretical philosophical system. Further, the revival of the vitality and creativity of Islamic culture and expounding Islam as a spiritual tradition, and indeed the importance of Rumi in this regard, is reinforced by the cumulative endeavours of those who have dealt with his works in the past forty years or so, and who have made him far better known to us and familiarized us with this Muslim genius.<sup>6)</sup>

Then again, contacts made at international conferences like this are further facilitated by the use of electronic communications and web sites – that new-found continent – in which Rumi, too, is an increasing presence; the impact of this greater ease of communication is quite remarkable. In the light of what I have already said, this growing interaction provides a new vitality for the transformation of human life and society and of the world as a whole.<sup>7)</sup>

In this dismal prospect of drained energy and disintegrating culture in the world of today, of a world order that functions thanks only to the balance of fear, dictated by compromises and the occasional coincidence of interests, and to the retreat and breakdown of tradition that reflected culture as a life force, it would seem that the Islamic tradition has suffered a loss of confidence, and has become not so much a captive of western ideology and values as trapped in the intellectual morass, lack of inventiveness and self-pity of Muslims themselves as they bewail their own fate. We seem to be so divided that the only thing uniting us is misfortune; only rarely are there such commendable events as this conference. True, this wretched state of affairs has been exacerbated by the constant crises resulting from foreign incursions and outside cultural and military dominance, but it was a different matter as long as the surge of new energy and new visions lasted. Above all,

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5) "O lovers! The religion of love is not found in Islam alone.  
In the realm of love, there is neither belief, nor unbelief." (130a).

6) See in particular S. H. Nasr, W. Chittick et. al., and footnotes 17-22.

7) See in particular Rumi Forum for Interfaith Dialogue, web sites [www.rumiform.org](http://www.rumiform.org); [www.dar-al-masnavi.org](http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org) ..., and especially [www.semazen.net](http://www.semazen.net).

we must once again identify the philosophical insights of Rumi's work, and among the questions we must ask ourselves is: What now constitutes the warrant of the substantiality and value of Islamic philosophical discourse in general? What is the standard mode of Islamic philosophical discourse? What has become of those unfettered visions of life and reality that even now we can discern in Rumi's writings? By asking this we are raising questions of self-transcendence, comparison, contrast, evaluation, integration and definition, or of the transformation of our Muslim identity and vision towards a global understanding of the human race and the world as a whole.<sup>8)</sup>

In the context of globalization and political circumstances of cultural exchange and the establishment of philosophical dialogue, then (Henry Corbin would call this the necessary establishment of a metahistorical dialogue in history),<sup>9)</sup> mutual adjustment and understanding demands of us that we revive traditional sources and develop cultural interpenetration, or 'crosspollination', to use Lenn Goodman's term.<sup>10)</sup> But has the Islamic philosophical paradigm really lost its former vitality and vision? In other words, how best are we now to define the theory of wisdom that was embodied by Rumi's spirit of openness, which attests to the very opposite of today's prevailing stagnation and a tunnel vision of the world.

For if philosophy is the essence of tradition, since it is a mode of thought and innovative commensurability of action in line with the ideal values of tradition, then philosophy is the awareness, the consciousness of culture and civilization, since the philosophical views discussed by Sufis like Rumi, Ibn 'Arabi and other prominent Muslim thinkers and accepted by ordinary people over the centuries are the very ideas that guide culture and action. Our first task, therefore, is to understand and interpret the old in the light of the new, and to interpret the traditional in modern discourse: that is, it consists of constructing a new identity. For this very reason, the development of contemporary Islamic philosophical discourse must focus on our prevailing inner weaknesses and on identifying a modern mode appropriate to this specific case of reading and interpreting Rumi and other traditional Muslim thinkers like him; for it is only Rumi's teachings, his philosophy of love – his metaphysical and ontological status of Love<sup>11)</sup> – that create a space for

8) With some reflections on the Euro-America-centric topography of today's world of globalization. Today we speak less of "internationalization" and more of "globalization" where the broader context of thinking suggest rather that this new world should be understood as a kind of "unity-in-diversity", where cultural differences would be able to coexist within a shared place of dialogical exchange. Hence, a truly world can only be opened by way of a cross-cultural dialogue which brings these various microcosmic worlds into communication with one another without canceling out their specific perspectival differences. Or, a true world thus be neither a monocultural fusion, which would abolish cultural difference, nor a relativistic dispersion, which would reify assertions of uniqueness; rather, it would be a multicultural conversation, where cultures maintain and develop their uniqueness only by way of opening themselves up to ongoing dialogue with one another. In this vision cultures could freely enter into dialectical and dialogical relations with one another, because a nation that does not contain a principle of globality today (i.e., awareness of and openness to the wider world) within itself is not a true nation.

9) *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* by Toshihiko Izutsu, p. 1.

10) Actually, this is term from the very title of his work: *Jewish and Islamic Philosophy: Crosspollinations in the Classic Age* (Edinburgh University Press and Rutgers University Press, 1999).

11) For Love in Sufism see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 130-48; on its role in Rumi's poetry, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983. For Corbin's analysis of *les fidèles d'amour*, see *En Islam Iranien III: les fidèles d'amour*, Paris: Gallimard 1972, pp. 9-146. Corbin describes love as a tripartite relationship between God, the human being and the cosmos.

our present-day mediation of Islamic and western philosophy through conceptual interpretation and reinterpretation, with the capacity to become a constant demand for comparative and intercultural philosophical thought, that mega-trend in philosophy today.

In fact, within contemporary Islamic thought Rumi's thinking provides a much needed creative response and critical challenge within the framework of today's colliding paradigms. However, if we have not yet reached that degree of perfection, it means we have not invested enough effort in the undertaking. It is fortunate that the scorching desert winds of Ibn Taymiyya's invective – to adapt Muhammad Iqbal's phrase<sup>12)</sup> – have spared the fresh Persian rose, which can only be a metaphor for the living Sufi teachings. We must therefore be personally dedicated to practising his teachings, and not only to our contemplative or speculative testimony to the Supreme Truth, even though postmodern man is all too ready, even in spirituality, to look for short-cuts like those provided by a double-click on the computer. As a result, developing Rumi's vision within ourselves means developing a human nature unenslaved to desire and free of over-attachment to worldly pursuits, which denotes the quest for self-actualization through our own free will.

### III

Based on what has been said so far, one wonders whether this is the reason for finding Rumi in the Hegelian presentation of the development of the philosophy of the Absolute Spirit. In Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* is the following passage:

“But to go back again to the question of fact. If we want to see the consciousness of the One – not as with the Hindus split between the featureless unity of abstract thought, on the one hand, and on the other, the long-winded weary story of its particular detail, but – in its finest purity and sublimity, we must consult the Mohammedans. If, e.g., in the excellent Jeleddin Rumi in particular, we find the unity of the soul with the One set forth, and that unity described as love, this spiritual unity is an exaltation above the finite and vulgar, a transfiguration of the natural and spiritual, in which the externalism and transitoriness of immediate nature, and of empirical secular spirit, is discarded and absorbed.”<sup>13)</sup>

12) M. Iqbal, *Razvoj metafizike u Perziji: prilog historiji muslimanske filozofije* (*The Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the History of Muslim Philosophy*), bilingual edition, trans. N. Kahteran, Connectum, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 71: “but the burning simoon of Ibn Taymiyya's invective could not touch the freshness of the Persian rose. The one was completely swept away by the flood of barbarian invasions; the other, unaffected by the Tartar revolution, still holds its own.”

13) In the original, this quotation is taken from the translation of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enciklopedija filozofijskih znanosti*, trans. Viktor D. Sonnenfeld, Veselin Masleša – Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1987, pp. 479-80. [After scanning and searching the texts of all the English translations available on the internet, I have been unable to find this quotation; as a result, the above has been translated from the Bosnian with reference to the German original: G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (Suhrkamp, 1830.) – Neu herausgegeben von Friedhelm Nicolini und Otto Pöggler, Verlag von Felix Meiner Hamburg, 1965, pp. 386-87:

Will man, um noch einmal auf das Faktische zurückzukommen, das Bewusstsein des Einen, nicht nach der indischen Spaltung einestheils in die bestimmungslose Einheit des abstrakten Denkens, andernteils in die ermüdende, selbst litaneiartig werdende Durchführung am Besonderen, sondern es in der schönsten Reinheit und Erhabenheit sehen, so muss man sich bei den Mohammedanern umsehen. Wenn z. B. bei dem vortrefflichen *Dschelaleddin Rumi* insbesondere die Einheit der Seele mit dem Einen, auch diese Einheit als Liebe

Hegel then adds a footnote to the effect that in order to give a clearer notion of this, he cannot resist quoting certain passages that may give an idea of his admiration for *Rückert's* art of translation, from which he quotes (this confirms his finding that the esoteric reflection on God and identity, as well as on cognition and concepts, is philosophy itself).<sup>14)</sup>

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hervorgehoben wird, so ist diese geistige Einheit eine Erhebung über das Endliche und Gemeine, eine Verklärung des Natürlichen und Geistigen, in welcher eben das Äusserliche, Vergängliche des unmittelbaren Natürlichen wie des empirischen, weltlichen Geistigen ausgeschieden und absorbiert wird.”

“One must turn to the Mohammadans if, to return once more to the factual, one would not see the consciousness of the “One” in the light of the Indian separation in part into a unicity of abstract thought without definition, and in part to the wearisome performance, almost a litany in fact, of the peculiar, but rather in the finest purity and sublimity. When, for example, the admirable Jalaluddin Rumi lays particular emphasis on the unity of the soul with the “One” – unity as love, it is a spiritually unified elevation above finitude and the commonplace, a transformation of the natural and spiritual, in which the outwardly and transient is detached and absorbed in unmediated naturalness and in empirical, worldly spirituality.”

Finally, thanking to Dr. Oliver Leaman from the University of Kentucky, I have found this quotation in: “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Thre of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences”, trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 308.

- 14) (The English translations below have been made from the Bosnian, though with occasional reference to the German for clarification. Without any indication of the sources in Rumi’s work, it has not been possible in the time available to find translations direct from the originals, made by any of the recognized translators of Rumi’s poetry. But, again, thanking to the kindness of Dr. Oliver Leaman, we have attached here mentioned English translation by William Wallace, who also has been kindly helped by Miss May Kendall, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-310.)

III.

I looked up and saw the One in every open space,  
I looked down, and saw the One in every foaming wave.  
I looked into my heart, which was an ocean, holding worlds,  
Full of a thousand dreams, I saw the One in all my dreams.  
Air, fire, earth and water dissolved into the One  
In your fear that the One dare not oppose you.  
That the heart of all life between earth and heaven  
Guide you, may the One not hesitate.

V.

Though the Sun is but a glimmer of your glory,  
My light and yours are in origin but One.  
If the dust at your feet is the circling heavens,  
One is yet but one, your and my being.  
The heavens become dust, and dust the heavens,  
But the One remains One, and your being mine alone.  
How do the words of life that cross the skies  
Rest in the tiny coffer of the heart?  
How are the rays of the sun, to flower into light,  
Concealed in the fragile wrappings of a gem?  
How, by just supping and sipping humusy earth,  
Can a rose garden grow?  
As a gleaming pearl becomes the solar glory?  
Heart, whether you swim the tide or glow with heat:  
Water and fire are *one* water, only *yours*, only *pure*.

IX.

I say to you that man is shaped from clay:  
For God breathed into clay the spirit of *love*.  
I tell you why the heavens circle endlessly:  
For God’s throne imbues them with the glow of *love*.  
I tell you why the morning breezes blow:  
Ever to freshen the leaves of the rose garden of *love*.

III

Ich sach empor, und sah in allen Räumen Eines.  
Hinab, und sah in allen Wellenschäumen Eines.  
Ich sah ins Herz, es war ein Meer, ein Raum der Welten  
Voll tausend Träum', ich sah in allen Träumen Eines.  
Luft, Feuer, Erd und Wasser sind in Eines geschmolzen  
In deiner Furcht, dass dir nicht wagt zu bäumen Eines.  
Der Herzen alles Lebens zwischen Erd und Himmel  
Anbetung dir zu schlagen soll nicht säumen Eines.

(I saw but One through all heaven's starry spaces gleaming:  
I saw but One in all sea billows wildly streaming.  
I looked into the heart, a waste of worlds, a sea, —  
I saw a thousand dreams, — yet One amid all dreaming.  
And earth, air, water, fire, when thy decree is given,  
Are molten into One: against thee none hath striven.  
There is no living heart but beats unfailingly  
In the one song of praise to thee, from earth and heaven.)

V

Obgleich die Sonn' ein Scheinchen ist dienes Scheines nur,  
Doch ist mein Licht und deines ursprünglich Eines nur.  
Ob Staub zu deinen Füßen der Himmel ist, der kreist;  
Doch Eines ist und Eines mein Sein und deines nur.  
Der Himmel wird zum Staube, zum Himmel wird der Staub,  
Und Eines bleibt und Eines, dein Wesen meines nur.  
Wie kommen Lebensworte, die durch den Himmel gehn  
Zu ruhn im engen Raume des Herzensschreines nur?  
Wie bergen Sonnenstrahlen, um heller aufzublühn,  
Sich in die spröden Hüllen des Edelsteines nur?

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I tell you why the night is enwrapped in a veil:  
To bring the world into the beloved's tent of *love*.  
I can tell you all the secrets of creation:  
For the answer to every riddle is only *love*.

XV.

Death brings surcease from life's misfortunes,  
But life abhors the thought of death.  
And thus the heart shrinks from love  
As though from the threat of death.  
For where love awakes, then dies the  
I, that gloomy despot.  
Leave it to die in the night,  
And freely breathe in the rosy glow of dawn.



Wie darf Erdmoder speisend und trinkend Wesserschlam,   
Sich bilden die Verklärung des Rosenheines nur?   
Wie ward, was als ein Tröpflein die stumme Muschel sog,   
Als Perlenglanz die Wonne des Sonnenscheines nur?   
Herz, ob du schwimmst in Fluten, ob du in Gluten glimmst:   
Flut ist und Glut *ein* Wasser; sei *deines*, *reines* nur.

(As one ray of thy light appears the noonday sun,   
But yet thy light and mine eternally are one.   
As dust beneath thy feet the heaven that rolls on high:   
Yet only one, and one for ever, thou and I.   
The dust may turn to heaven, and heaven to dust decay;   
Yet are thou one with me, and shalt be one for aye. \*   
How may words of life that fill heaven's utmost part   
Rest in the narrow casket of one poor human heart?   
How can the sun's own rays, a fairer gleam to fling,   
Hide in a lowly husk, the jewel's covering?   
How may the rose-grove all its glorius bloom unfold,   
Drinking in mire and slime, and feeding on the mould?   
How can the darksome shell that sips the salt sea stream   
Fashion a shining pearl, the sunlight's joyous beam?   
Oh heart! should warm winds fan thee, shouldn't thou floods endure,   
One element are wind and flood; but be thou pure.)

IX

Ich sage dir, wie aus dem Ton der Mensch geformt ist:   
Weil Gott dem Tone blies den Odem ein der *Liebe*.   
Ich sage dir, warum die Himmel immer kreisen:   
Weil Gottes Thron sie füllt mit Widerschein der *Liebe*.   
Ich sage dir, warum die Mogenwinde blasen:   
Frisch aufzublütern stets den Rosenhain der *Liebe*.   
Ich sage dir, warum die Nacht den Schleier umhängt:   
Die Welt zu einem Brautzelt einzuweihn der *Liebe*.   
Ich kann die Rätsel alle dir der Schöpfung sagen:   
Denn aller Rätsel Lösung ist allein der *Liebe*.

(I'll tell thee how from out the dust God moulded man, —   
Because the breath of Love He breathed into his clay:   
I'll tell thee why the speheres their whirling paths began, —

They mirror to God's throne Love's glory day by day:  
I'll tell thee why the morning winds blow o'er the grove, —  
It is to bid Love's roses bloom abundantly:  
I'll tell thee why the night broods deep the earth above, —  
Love's bridal tent to deck with sacred canopy:  
All riddles of the earth dost thou desire to prove? —  
To every earthly riddle is Love alone the key.)

XV

Wohl endet Tod des Lebens Not,  
Doch schauert Leben vor dem Tod.  
So schauert vor der Lieb' ein Herz,  
Als ob es sei vom Tod bedroht.  
Denn *wo die Lieb' erwachet, stirbt*  
*Das Ich, der dunkle Despot.*  
Du lass ihn sterben in der Nacht  
Und atme frei im Morgenrot.

(Life shrinks from Death in woe and fear,  
Though Death ends well Life's bitter need:  
So shrinks the heart when Love draws near,  
As through 'twere Death in very deed:  
For wheresoever Love finds room,  
There Self, the sullen tyrant, dies.  
So let him perish in the gloom, —  
Thou to the dawn of freedom rise.)

Certainly, articulating the forms of religious pluralism that are deeply pluralistic in an age of global pluralization of society *hic et nunc* is of crucial importance, which is why we turn to the great Jalaluddin Rumi. It is my intention in this brief paper to strengthen, defend and develop a hypothesis known today as “deep religious pluralism,” which is in fact grounded in the teachings of every traditional model of thought. This thesis seeks to resolve the problem of religious diversity by demonstrating that many different religious traditions may simultaneously be true without falling into a kind of debilitating relativism. In other words, following in Rumi's footsteps, I shall attempt to answer the question of how we can move on from an age of monologue to one of true dialogue, all through comparative philosophical analysis, where the minimum standard dividing pluralism from relativism is an underlying adherence to the law of non-contradiction.<sup>15)</sup> As a result, in line with a deeper understanding of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue, everything possible

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15) See Griffin, David Ray. *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Louisville, Kentucky: WJK, 2005).

must be done to prevent religion turning into ideology. Regrettably, in our public sphere we are constantly faced anew with precisely that process of about-turn or conversion.

We must be ever vigilant in preserving religion from becoming ideology (by which I do not mean to single out any particular religion). One of the greatest dangers we are facing globally in the world of today is the distortion of universal religious messages into ideology, which then allows people to fight in the name of their religion in a modern context in utter disregard of the rights of others, where the Other is not seen as one towards whom we bear infinite responsibility (E. Levinas),<sup>16)</sup> but one whom we seek to enslave and subjugate, and even ultimately to mortify if they cannot be subjugated to the will of our religion/ideology, party or nation. A religion (any religion) that is mutilated and made to serve ideological constructions is what I have dubbed U-turned religion – specifically, in the title of this paper I refer to U-turned Islam.

Finally, how far we shall be successful in avoiding falling into this kind of conversion of religion into ideology will be reflected by our either sinking deeper into or overcoming and transcending a reductionist image of the world and an immoral spiral of reciprocity all around us and along all the fault-lines of today's world. My involvement in drafting this paper is a reaction to the state of existential vulnerability of the traditional values I refer to, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but globally. For to repeat yet again, “as long as dialogue is possible, there is a chance of justice; when dialogue comes to an end, it opens the way to violence” (Selimović, p. 12).

Rumi's immense popularity in the USA, and indeed world-wide, could truly prove an incentive for this intercultural dialogue, already part of English idiom thanks above all to R.A. Nicholson<sup>17)</sup> and A.J. Arberry,<sup>18)</sup> and later to Nasr,<sup>19)</sup> Chittick,<sup>20)</sup> Schimmel<sup>21)</sup> and many others.<sup>22)</sup> Their work in studying Rumi is of incomparable value for initiating such dialogue and overcoming the present cacophony, which we must counter with Love (*'ishq*), that central theme of all Rumi's works. There, love is possessed of ontological objectivity, since he gives precedence to love over reason. Love as a universal reality, independent of us human beings, or as a divine attribute,

16) E. Levinas, “Totality and Infinity” (Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité, 1961) and “Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence” (Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence, 1974), both translated into English by the American philosopher Alphonso Lingis.

17) Nicholson, R.A. *Rumi, Poet and Mystic*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950; *Rumi, J. The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi*, vol 2, trans. by R.A. Nicholson, Cambridge, 1982.

18) Arberry, A.J. *The Rubā'iyāt of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, London: R. Walker, 1949; Id., *Tales from the Masnavi*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963; Id., *More Tales from the Masnavi*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968.

19) S.H. Nasr, *Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi: Supreme Persian Poet and Sage*, Tehran, 1974.

20) William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love – The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, Ibn Sina: Sarajevo, 2005.

21) Annemarie Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun. A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*, SUNY Press, 1993, and *Deciphering the signs of God. A Phenomenological approach to Islam*, New York, 1994.

22) See in particular Barks, C. *The Essential Rumi*, New York, 1997; Friedlander, S. *The Whirling dervishes: Being an Account of the Sufi order known as the Mevlevi and its founder the poet and mystic Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi*, New York, 1992; Halman, T.S. “Love is all. Mevlana's poetry and philosophy”, *Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and the whirling dervishes*, red. M. And and T.S. Halaman, Istanbul, 1983; Lewis, F. *Rumi, past and present, East and West: the life, teaching and poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, Oxford, 2000; Afzal Iqbal, *The Life and Work of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi*, London: The Octagon Press, 1983; “Rumi's Thoughts” ed. by Seyed G. Safavi, Salman-Azadeh Publication, 2003. For the entire Masnavi in English, see Reynolds A. Nicholson's translation published by the Trustees of the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust.

is always given a capital L, whereas individual love, as a human characteristic, is not. This is important because of the obvious confusion between secular and religious forms of love, since any emphasis of the physical could lead to an under-emphasis of the spiritual (similar to the distinction between *eros* and *agape* in Meister Eckhart's Christian thought, or *jnāna marga* and *bhakti marga* in the Bhagavad-Gītā – religious love versus religious cognition – where the utter love of the human heart corresponds to the mercy of the personal God or Ishwar, and where these two forms of love are differentiated). However, despite this differentiation between love ('*ishq*), selfish or self-interested love (*mahabba insāniyyah*) and selfless or disinterested Love (*mahabba rabbāniyyah*) – a distinction made in the Sufi tradition by as early a mystic as Rābiya al-'Adawiyya – when we go deeper into the matter we find that in Rumi's case all love is in fact love for God, for everything is His reflection. For all that, it is not easy to embark on one's own spiritual quest without a powerful spiritual guide, in his case Shams of Tabriz. This is not the place, however, to say more about the mystical inspiration of the pupil by his teacher, which in fact constitutes a consistent manual for every teaching relationship in the history of Sufism, that unbroken pleiade of Sufis from the spiritual brotherhood of the *ashāb al-āshiqīn*, Corbin's *les fidèles d'amour*.

Here we must ask ourselves what is it that is contrary to Rumi's spirit of openness and the philosophy of love? If we transpose ourselves within any Muslim context, one thing must be crystal clear, and that is that we must distinguish between the idea of Islam as an ideal and Muslims themselves as the proponents of that idea, as those who attempt to realize that ideal in their lives. Regardless of how successful they are, the shortcomings and failings that inevitably accompany their endeavours are theirs alone, not those of Islam, nor do they necessarily emanate from Islam. Here I have in mind an authentic Islamic orientation, remaining true to the "middle way" (*sirāt al-mustaqīm*) between lapsing into extremes, an orientation that leads to balanced culture and civilization, religion and science, and demands effort and aspiration of both individuals and groups. To put it at its simplest and briefest, an aversion to extremism means having greater confidence in how our experience leads us to act than in any actions prompted by ideological abstractions or dogmas. According greater value to human experience, and shaping our institutions in line with that standpoint, gives us flexibility and tolerance, while in practice, however limited (and initiated) our valuing of human experience may be, we still live on the basis of a cultural space.<sup>23)</sup>

This is why it is so important, even from a practical point of view, not to oppose Sufism but to defend it, and to seek to remove the obstacles placed in its way and preventing the spread of its ideas, which in another context I have called *ihṣānī* intellectuality. All that remains is for us to hope and pray, along with those who advance this doctrine today,<sup>24)</sup> that the positive forces for integration within Sufism may be revived and succeed in rectifying the painful situation faced by Muslims and non-Muslims in many countries today. For without this inner integration, we shall

23) Establishing the place of cross-cultural dialogue on the basis of a particular cultural form, political entity, or religious dogma would inevitably institute an arbitrary hierarchy that tends towards disenfranchisement and imperialism. About this issue see very interesting discussion by Bret W. Davis, "Toward a World of Worlds..." in: *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, ed. by James W. Heisig, Nanzan, 2006, p. 221.

24) See S.H. Nasr, *Sufism and the Integration of the Inner and Outer Life of Man*, The Singhvi Interfaith Lecture for the Year 1999, The Temenos Academy, 2004.

never be able to integrate the outside world around us.

Sadly, the idea of *ihsānī* intellectuality has been largely banished by the paradoxes and contradictions of our age. It would seem, to anyone who is fully aware of what is going on around us, that the extremists have once again seized centre stage in presenting Islam and Muslims in the world. It is still, of course, an open question how Islam began to be equated with the fanatical, radicalized minority that does indubitably exist among Muslims, as indeed it does in other religious communities. A watered-down, anodyne religion, a U-turned religion (which, in the case of Islam, some call *al-islām al-mu'addal*, modified Islam), is the reason why Islam itself, without a certain form of *ihsānī* intellectual tradition, has become exposed to the emergence of an ideology stripped of spiritual effectiveness, and why its central doctrine – *la ilāha illā Llāh* – has been reduced to a mere slogan. Each time this occurs, religion – any religion, not just Islam – is reduced to mere ideology; and when everything comes down to ideology, it is no longer able to cleanse the human heart of all its various iniquities, but serves only to justify the purely worldly pursuits of individuals or narrow interest groups.

#### IV

As we advance into this new millennium, we need to learn how to reconcile new contradictions and oppositions, not through polemic, which stirs up quarrels and disputes, and even leads to war, but through constructive dialogue, the only way to peace and peaceful coexistence between peoples. We must of course continue, as ever, to make the distinction between traditional and traditionalist Islam (the former denoting the living power of tradition and vitality, and the latter standing for the ossification of tradition, and the stale spirit of the morass). There is no way that “U-turned Islam” (*al-islām al-mu'addal*) can contribute to an understanding of a Rumi-style universalist, inclusivist reading of the Islamic tradition, nor of any other genuine tradition not disfigured by the particularist, exclusivist interpretations of national chauvinists. We truly can and must do so through Love, the thread that can bind the whole of humankind together. Or that German philosopher was right (M. Heidegger), after all, when he said: “Nur ein Gott kann uns retten” (“Only a God can save us”).<sup>25)</sup> Rumi’s caravan of the *fidèles d’amour* is passing by as we speak: let us join it, let us join what Hans Meinke called “the only hope for the dark times in which we live”.<sup>26)</sup>

25) “Der Spiegel” (1976., no. 23). This is the title of interview which was published after his death and is quoted in: Richard Wisser, *Martin Heidegger u mišljenju na putu*, transl. Sulejman Bosto & Željko Pavić, Zagreb: Demetra, 2003, pp. 355.

26) Quotation from the book cover of “Rumi’s Thoughts”, ed. by Seyed G. Safavi, Institute of Islamic Studies, Salamn-Azadeh Publications, 2003.